

BRANCHING OUT

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Fall 2010

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A Racine County Dissertation

By Terri DeWalt



Hello everyone!

As fall approaches and students are settling back into their school schedules, I find myself being thankful for the fact that, after being in school for more years than I like to count, I no longer fit into the category of a student.

And now that a year has passed since I officially closed the door on my graduate career, I feel that I am ready to once again look at my dissertation and share a bit of it with you. Now don't quickly flip to the next page thinking that this will be boring dry academic stuff, because I will do my best to make it as interesting as possible. To begin with, I completed my dissertation on

Racine County, so that may be at least somewhat interesting to you! The title was "The Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence Against Adolescents in Racine County, WI and the Community Readiness Model." The project was a qualitative study that involved conducting an assessment of the differences between the prevention of sexual violence in western and eastern Racine County using the Community Readiness Model (CRM).

The CRM is a method of assessment developed at Colorado State University that helps match a community with the type of prevention program that is most appropriate for it. For example, some communities are much more knowledgeable about a certain issue than others, and as a result, may be ready for a more comprehensive or in-depth type of prevention programming than a community that is not very knowledgeable about the issue. The CRM is designed to help someone know how to match a prevention program to the unique characteristics of a community.

The CRM is composed of six "Dimensions" and nine "Stages of Readiness." The six Dimensions are components of a community that comprise its Stage of Readiness to address an issue. The Dimensions include Efforts, Knowledge of the Efforts, Community Climate, Leadership, Knowledge of the Issue and Resources Related to the Issue. The Stages of Readiness are: "No Awareness, Denial/ Resistance, Vague Awareness, Preplanning, Preparation, Initiation, Stabilization, Confirmation/ Expansion and lastly Professionalization." See the tables on the next page to better understand the Dimensions and Stages of Readiness.

In this case, the CRM assessment was used to gain a richer understanding of how ready Racine County is to address the prevention of sexual violence against adolescents. The study involved interviews with community professionals, adolescents, and community members regarding their knowledge and beliefs about sexual violence

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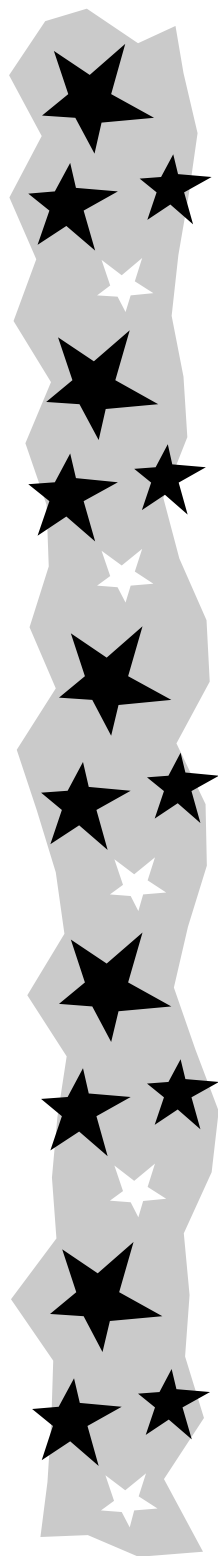
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prevention. Those interviews were then scored to determine where the two communities fell on the Stages of Readiness for each Dimension.

The study found that, overall, both rural and urban Racine County fell within the “Vague Awareness” Stage of Readiness to address the prevention of sexual violence against adolescents. This means that although there is some basic knowledge of the issue of sexual violence, there is not widespread and comprehensive knowledge across all segments of the population.

The study recommended that SAS increase its basic awareness and knowledge building activities about the prevalence and incidence of sexual violence locally. As a result, we have been working to expand our initiatives to provide presentations and programming to organizations and businesses who are interested in learning more about sexual violence. If you work at an organization that you think would benefit from receiving more information about sexual violence, or would like to learn more about this study, feel free to contact me at tdewalt@lsswis.org.

— Terri



Dimensions of Community Readiness Model		
Dimension #	Dimension	Description of Dimension
1	Existing Prevention Efforts	What programs, activities, or policies exist to address the issue?
2	Community Knowledge of Prevention Efforts	What knowledge is there regarding the efforts being done to address the problem of sexual violence?
3	Leadership	Who are the appointed leaders or community members who are addressing the issue of sexual violence?
4	Community Climate	Prevailing attitudes in the community regarding sexual violence.
5	Knowledge about the Issue	Knowledge regarding the problem of sexual violence.
6	Resources	What financial, personnel, training resources are available to address the issue.

The Stages of Readiness Within The Community Readiness Model		
Stage #	Stage Name	Characteristics of Stage
1	No Awareness	The community does not recognize the issue as a problem.
2	Denial	There is little to no recognition of the issue as a problem within the local community.
3	Vague Awareness	There is a sense that the issue may be a problem in the community, a feeling that something should be done about it, but a lack of motivation to do anything about it.
4	Preplanning	There is recognition that there is a problem locally with the issue and a belief that something should be done about it.
5	Preparation	Planning is occurring in regards to how to address the issue. Information is gathered about how the issue affects the community locally as well as various possible prevention activities, actions or policies.
6	Initiation	An activity or action has been started and is underway, but it is still viewed as a new effort.
7	Stabilization	There are a few programs or activities being run and, overall they are experiencing support from community leaders. The staff are well trained and the efforts are viewed as stable.
8	Confirmation/Expansion	Standardized efforts are in place and the community leaders support expanding and improving those efforts. Original efforts have been evaluated and revised and new efforts are being explored and planned.
9	Professionalization/High level of community ownership	The community has detailed knowledge regarding the prevalence, risk factors and causes of the problem. Efforts have become strategic and are regularly evaluated and revised.



Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

I am pleased to announce that the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) is in the beginning stages of securing a new funding source through the state budget for Wisconsin based sexual assault services providers (SASP's). WCASA is working to develop a line item for funding for SASP's in the 2011-2013 fiscal budget.

SASP's provide a wide range of services for sexual assault victims/survivors, their family members, and the community as a whole. SASP's provide 24-hour crisis lines, 24-hour medical advocacy, legal advocacy, crisis intervention, mental health counseling, community presentations, school based presentations and information and referral to survivors and the community. Sexual Assault Services of Lutheran Social Services is the SASP for Racine County.

At this point in time, most SASP's finance their services through several competitive grants. Two federal funding sources for SASPs are the Victim of Crime Act (VOCA), and Violence Against Women Act grants. Another source of funding is the Sexual Assault Victim Services grant (SAVS), which is state money that comes from the fines that convicted offenders' pay. A third important funding source is from the SASP's local United Way. These funding sources can fluctuate greatly due to how each of them obtains their money.

Right now WCASA is in the beginning stages of building support for including a line item in the state budget for sexual assault programs by educating our legislatures on the services that SASP's provide, how they are funded and the overwhelming need for these services. This fall, the WCASA Policy Specialist will be meeting with every State Senator and Representative to discuss these important issues. After these meetings are completed and the elections are over, the WCASA Specialist will work with supporters from both legislative branches and parties to decide on how to best achieve the goal of including a funding source for SASP's in our state budget.

Another current legislative effort is that WCASA has also reformed their Policy Committee, which is working on finalizing the 2010-2011 legislative agenda. This committee will have their agenda finalized by early November. Some of the issues that will be included in the agenda are laws that did not get passed last year. One of these is the Child Victims Act-AB453/SB319, which removes the statute of limitations in civil cases for child sexual assault victims. The current statute of limitations is until the victim reaches the age of 35. This bill creates a 3-year "window of opportunity" to bring a civil case for those currently barred from doing so because of the current statute of limitations. Another one is the Gender Violence Act-AB480/SB 337, which is a bill that would create a civil cause of action for acts of violence motivated by the gender of the victim. Currently, a three-year statute of limitations exists for bringing such claims as a personal injury suits-

a short window of opportunity for many survivors of sexual assault. This bill would create the distinct civil cause of action and importantly includes a longer statute of limitations-seven years.

WCASA and WCADV will also be hosting a Lobby Day where citizens will be able to come to the capital to talk with their Representative to discuss some of the upcoming bills that will improve how victims of these crimes are treated. The date for the next Lobby Day has not been set yet but will probably be sometime in late March. I hope that you will consider attending this event. I have attended the past two Lobby Days and it feels empowering and energizing to share my voice and thoughts with my Representative.

If you wish to become more informed and involved with the legislative agenda from WCASA or WCADV please contact Ian Henderson at ianh@wcasa.org or Tony Gibart at tonyg@wcadv.org and ask to be added to the action alert list. When you are added to this list, you will receive e-mails that alert you when action is needed on your part. Usually, you will be asked to call or e-mail your Representative and ask them to support or not support a certain bill. The action that you are asked to do usually only takes a couple of minutes.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to give me a call at 262-763-6226 ext 31 or vbiehn@lsswis.org.

— Vicki

SAS Wish List

- Volunteer Advocates!
- Gift cards/certificates from Target, Office Depot, grocery stores or other discount stores
- Courage to Heal book series
- New clothes for victims at the hospital (t-shirts, sweat pants, underwear, etc.)
- Gift bags filled with body lotions & shower gels to be given to victims at the hospital
- Candy for counseling clients
- Bottled water or a water cooler to be used for counseling clients and during volunteer trainings

SAS Service Statistics January—June 2010

Crisis Line Calls.....	78
Racine Hospital Visits.....	35
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	5
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	57
New Counseling Clients.....	65
Counseling Sessions.....	378
Community Presentations.....	46
CAC Appointments.....	96



Helping Hands

By Katy Adler

One of the most vital parts of our program is our wonderful group of volunteers, a group of people who allow us to function as a program and serve sexual assault survivors in our community. Our Volunteer Advocates are on-call for 24-hour shifts, during which they respond to either Wheaton Franciscan Hospital in Racine or Burlington Memorial Hospital in Burlington when a sexual assault survivor comes in for an exam, and in the eastern part of the county, they answer calls and support survivors on our 24-hour crisis line. One of the longest serving members of our Volunteer Advocate team is Cookie Walek.

Cookie first heard about Sexual Assault Services through the paper. Initially, Cookie was interested, but was hesitant about becoming a Volunteer Advocate. She describes how she overcame this hesitation: "I listened to a speaker at a program and she said, 'Don't be afraid to take a risk. If something sounds challenging but you are interested, take a risk and do something that is not the norm for yourself.' I told my friend that this woman was talking to me, and I called the program when I got home." We are grateful that Cookie took the risk. She has provided invaluable support to sexual assault survivors for 9 years. Recently, Cookie took some time out of her busy schedule (volunteering, playing golf, and seeing grandchildren) to answer some questions about being a Volunteer Advocate.

What do you think makes a person a good SAS Advocate?

With me being leery and not thinking I can do it, I learned that just having compassion and being able to listen might be the most important part to people, reassuring them that whatever happened to them (if they are questioning that the assault was their fault) that it wasn't okay for someone to do this to them. Backing the survivor and reassuring them because some around them might not be supportive. Any other information we pass on about what is available – they appreciate that.

What is the most rewarding part of being a SAS Advocate?

The most rewarding part is from the survivors. I think the feeling you get from them when they give you a hug, give you a squeeze or say thank you. At times I've had people squeeze my hand, and it lets me know that it meant so much having me there. If they don't respond that way, you still feel it from them.

What is the most challenging thing about being a SAS Advocate?

Some of the tough situations you may get into, not knowing what you are going to walk into can be challenging. You become part of what they are going through and then walking away from it can be hard. Sometimes the situations aren't easy.

Do you volunteer with any other community groups or agencies? If so, what do you do?

I volunteer at church and with the Racine Garden Club. The Racine Garden Club gives out three scholarships every year and hold the Garden Walk. I host the Treasure Sale at my house, which makes us able to raise funds for the scholarships.

What do you do professionally?

I am retired.

What are some of your other interests and hobbies?

I golf, I bowl, and I go to Jazzercise. I also have 12 grandchildren, and I spend time with them, babysitting, picking them up from school.

Would you like to share anything about your family in general or how you being a SAS Advocate has affected your family?

The little kids call it the emergency phone. They will ask "Does somebody need help, Nana?" Otherwise, my family doesn't ask too much about it. They know what I do, that I volunteer.

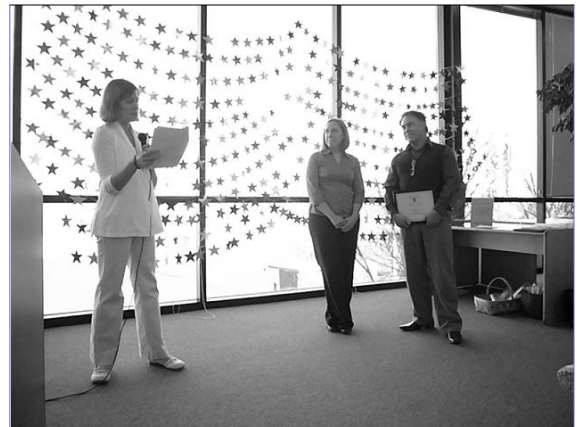
Any other information you would like to share?

I know that if I didn't volunteer that being a widow I would feel like I have too much right now. I would feel like I am doing too much for myself. There is more to life than just doing things for myself. I want to feel good by giving to others.

— Katy

Honoring SAS Superstars!

An aspect of our Volunteer Advocacy program that we are most proud of is the long-term commitments that our volunteers make to the program, and the stability this brings. Two of our Volunteer Advocates have significantly contributed to the stability of the program by volunteering for ten years. Curt Pruitt was a part of the first-ever volunteer training at Sexual Assault Services, in June 2000. Sandy DeWalt became a volunteer later that year, in October 2000, after attending the second training. Curt and Sandy are wonderful Advocates, and their commitment to the program displays the generosity of our volunteers and their dedication to supporting survivors.



Curt Pruitt receiving the "Star of Hope" volunteer award at the 2010 Take Back the Night



Family Advocate

By Samantha Sustachek

The time after children disclose sexual abuse is often confusing and difficult for their caregivers. Parents may have many questions – What types of behaviors can I expect to see in my child in the coming days, weeks and months? How do I cope with this situation and help my child to feel safe again? Do we need counseling? Other services? How do we pay for all of this? Luckily there is a place to go where parents and other caregivers can have these and other questions answered.

On a quarterly basis, Sexual Assault Services (SAS) offers an informational group for parents and other caregivers of children who have been sexually abused. The group meets at the Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and provides a safe place for caregivers to get the facts about sexual abuse and have their questions answered. The group is free of charge, and any caregivers can attend regardless of whether or not their children were seen at the CAC.

During the hour-long group session, common myths about child sexual abuse are addressed and the facts are discussed. Statistics on child sexual abuse in Racine County are given. Group participants learn ways to cope with the abuse themselves as well as ways to help the children in their lives cope. Services such as counseling, legal advocacy, and support groups are discussed, and referrals are given if necessary. Group participants also receive information about the Crime Victim Compensation program.

The next informational group is coming up soon (see box)! If you know of anyone who might benefit from participating in this group, please pass along the information to them. An RSVP is not necessary to attend. Please feel free to contact Samantha Sustachek with any questions at 262-619-1634 or via email at ssustachek@lsswis.org.

— Sam

What: Informational Group for parents and caregivers of children who have experienced sexual abuse

When: Tuesday, October 12, 2010

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Where: Racine County Child Advocacy Center – 2405 Northwestern Ave.

Call Samantha at 262-619-1634 for more information

Call For Submissions...



If you are a survivor or you know a survivor who would like to submit a poem, short story, artwork or editorial for publication in this newsletter, please email it to Samantha Sustachek (ssustachek@lsswis.org).



Meet Cassandra!

Hello! My name is Cassandra De La Rosa, the newest staff member here at Sexual Assault Services (SAS). I began working at SAS in the beginning of June as the Bilingual Outreach Advocate. My role in this position is to provide services to survivors and their support people who only speak Spanish. By providing services in Spanish we are eliminating one of the many barriers that survivors face in seeking services. This whole experience is new for me and for the program. We are learning each day how to best serve the Spanish speakers in Racine County.

The services that I am able to provide to survivors include personal advocacy, legal advocacy, and medical advocacy. My goal is to support and help survivors through direct service. I also help staff our 24-hour crisis line and hospital response team. An important part of my position is the Outreach component. My goal in Outreach is to create connections with community members and organizations that are already working with the Hispanic and Spanish speaking population and to build connections with those who want to work with this population. By working together we can best serve the community and ensure that survivors who do only speak Spanish know that SAS is a place where they can come and be supported.

Now a little bit about me.... I am a recent graduate from University of Wisconsin-Parkside with my B.A. in Sociology. Throughout school my goal after graduation was to get a job where I could help people and I have succeeded. Being able to support and help survivors who have gone through such a horrible experience is a privilege. I am growing everyday.

When I am not working here at SAS, I am most likely doing something with my family. I am very family oriented and take huge pride in being an auntie. I also enjoy reading and watching a lot of movies.

— Cassie



Sexual Assault Services
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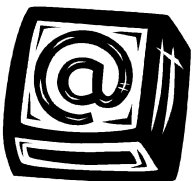
Contact Us!

SAS Racine Office
1220 Mound Ave. Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 31

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

